

International Education: “Germany’s Brothers Grimm”

Germany is one of the largest countries in the European Union and a country that has helped shape the history and culture of Europe. One specific example is that of the Brothers Grimm from Germany who helped shape folk literature as we know it today, not only in Europe, but around the world, as well, by developing a new way of collecting folktales and preserving them for all time. The following lesson and suggested extension activities will promote an understanding of Germany and these contributions to literature and culture.

To complete the story and activities, this lesson will take approximately 140 minutes.

I. Content:

I want my students to understand (or be able to):

- A. Recognize the contributions made by Germany’s Brothers Grimm to the existence of folk literature today.
- B. Identify the main ideas or essential messages within a given folktale.
- C. Describe characteristics of a folktale.
- D. Analyze the text elements of mood, character, setting, conflict, plot structure, theme, and point of view.

II. Prerequisites:

To fully appreciate this lesson, the student must have basic understanding of:

- A. Determining the main ideas or essential messages within a text.
- B. Analyzing narrative literature according to the text elements of mood, character, setting, conflict, plot structure, theme, and point of view.

III. Instructional Objectives:

The student will:

- A. Locate Germany on a world map. On the map of Germany, locate Berlin, the current capital. Locate Frankfurt. Locate Hanau, the birthplace of the Brothers Grimm, just outside Frankfurt. Then locate the Land of Lower Saxony. On the map of Lower Saxony, locate Hamelin, the setting for “The Pied Piper of Hamelin.”
- B. Take notes about folktales and the Brothers Grimm.
- C. Read “The Pied Piper of Hamelin” and meet with team members or in literature circles to analyze the tale and complete a reader-response sheet and a brainstorming sheet.
- D. Retell in tableaux form an assigned part of the tale to the class.

*International Education: “Germany’s Brothers Grimm”***IV. Materials and Equipment:**

Teacher: Overhead projector
Map transparencies:
Germany in the World, Teacher Handout #1
Germany Map, Teacher Handout #2
Lower Saxony & Bremen, Teacher Handout #3
Extension Activities, **Teacher Handout #4**
Background information on folktales (provided in Instructional Procedures)
Information about the Grimm Brothers (provided in Instructional Procedures); see additional information on Grimm Brothers’ home page at <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm.html>

Available Internet sites:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/grimm/article.html>
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/grimm/about.html>
http://www.hameln.com/tourism/piedpiper/open_air.htm
<http://www.hameln.com/info/index.htm>
<http://www.hameln.com/tourism/index.htm>
http://www.fln.vcu.edu/grimm/grimm_menu.html
<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html>
<http://www.familymanagement.com/literacy/grimms/grimms-toc.html>
<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm.html>

Students: Paper for note taking
Partners in teams/literature circles
Copies of the following:
“Reader-Response Activity”, **Student Handout #1**
“Guidelines for Creating Enacted Tableaux”, **Student Handout #2**
“Brainstorming Sheet: Folktale Tableaux”, **Student Handout #3**
“The Pied Piper of Hamelin”, **Student Handout #4**, **Student Handout #5**—two different versions of the Grimm Brothers’ original tale.
Student Handout #6: The Piped Piper of Hamelin: A Child’s Story

V. Instructional Procedures:

This lesson is designed to be integrated into a unit on folk literature.

- A. Students take notes. Explain to students that brothers Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, both German scholars and university professors, had a major influence on folk literature as we know it today. The Grimm Brothers loved the stories of their people and were concerned that tales passed down for centuries through the oral tradition would be lost forever as the

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storytellers passed away. Inventing a method that is still used by modern folklorists, the brothers began collecting tales from native storytellers by recording them word for word in the style of the teller. The Grimms published Kinder- und Hausmärchen, (Children’s and Household Tales), more commonly known to us as Grimms’ Fairy Tales, in 1812 and another volume in 1814. Most of the tales, however, were not originally intended for children, and given that Germany’s history is filled with trauma and war and challenges to its borders, it is understandable that tales were often gory and violent, unlike versions we might recognize such as ones adapted by Disney Studios.

- B. Explain to students that folktales reflect the beliefs and values of a culture and that many cultures have folktales with similar themes. Tales were told to entertain but also to teach lessons and to pass on values and wisdom. Scholars believed that one reason for the common themes was that travelers spread tales to other cultures. Another theory was that many of these themes are so universal and so common that they appear in all cultures. Most folklorists now believe that many of these similar themes developed because of a combination of travel and of universal themes that appear spontaneously in different cultures throughout the world. Students record these points.
- C. Tell the class that “The Pied Piper of Hamelin,” considered by many to be the most well known German folktale, is based on a legend set in the city of Hamelin, (also spelled Hameln) on the River Weser. According to this legend, the city was plagued by rats and employed a piper to destroy the vermin but ended up losing its children in the process. It is thought that the tale is actually less about rats and more about Hamelin’s young people being forced to flee areas of great poverty to seek employment elsewhere. Each Sunday at noon in modern-day Germany, the people of Hamelin reenact the tale of “The Pied Piper of Hamelin.” The story is also displayed on the Hochzeitshaus (Wedding House) carillon three times daily. Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines “pied” as multi-colored or describing a costume of many colors. Students take notes.
- D. Read “The Pied Piper of Hamelin” (**Student Handout #4 or Student Handout #5**) together. When finished, students who have already been grouped in teams or literature circles will gather to discuss the tale. Each student will fill out the reader-response sheet (**Student Handout #1**).
- E. Students gather as a class to share their findings.
- F. Students in their teams/literature circles complete a brainstorming sheet (**Student Handout #3**) and begin rehearsing their tableaux. Each team will have been assigned to present a tableaux that will retell one of the following elements of plot structure: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, or resolution.
- G. Each team presents their tableaux to the class.

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- H. The closure for each team’s tableaux should include a final tableau that illustrates the mood they identify in their assigned element.

VI. Assessment/Evaluation:

Upon completion of this lesson, students should be demonstrating success in identifying the elements of mood, character, setting, conflict, plot structure, theme, and point of view. Students should be able to write a summary about “The Pied Piper of Hamelin,” folktales, and the Grimm brothers’ contributions to folk literature.

VII. Idaho Achievement Standards:

Standard 1: Reading

Goal 1.8: Vocabulary and Concept Development

7.LA.1.8.4 Clarify pronunciations, meanings, alternate word choices, parts of speech, and etymology of words using the dictionary, thesaurus, glossary and technology sources.

Standard 2: Comprehension/Interpretation

Goal 2.3: Acquire Skills for Comprehending Literary Text

7.LA.2.3.1 Read and respond to literature from a variety of genres, including poetry

7.LA.2.3.2 Analyze characterization as shown through a character’s thoughts, words, speech patterns, and actions; the narrator’s description; and the thoughts, words, and actions of other characters.

7.LA.2.3.3 Explain the influence of setting on mood, character and plot of the story.

7.LA.2.3.4 Analyze plot development, including types of conflict

7.LA.2.3.6 Analyze the themes of various genres

Standard 4: Writing Applications

Goal 4.1: Acquire Expressive (Narrative/Creative) Writing Skills

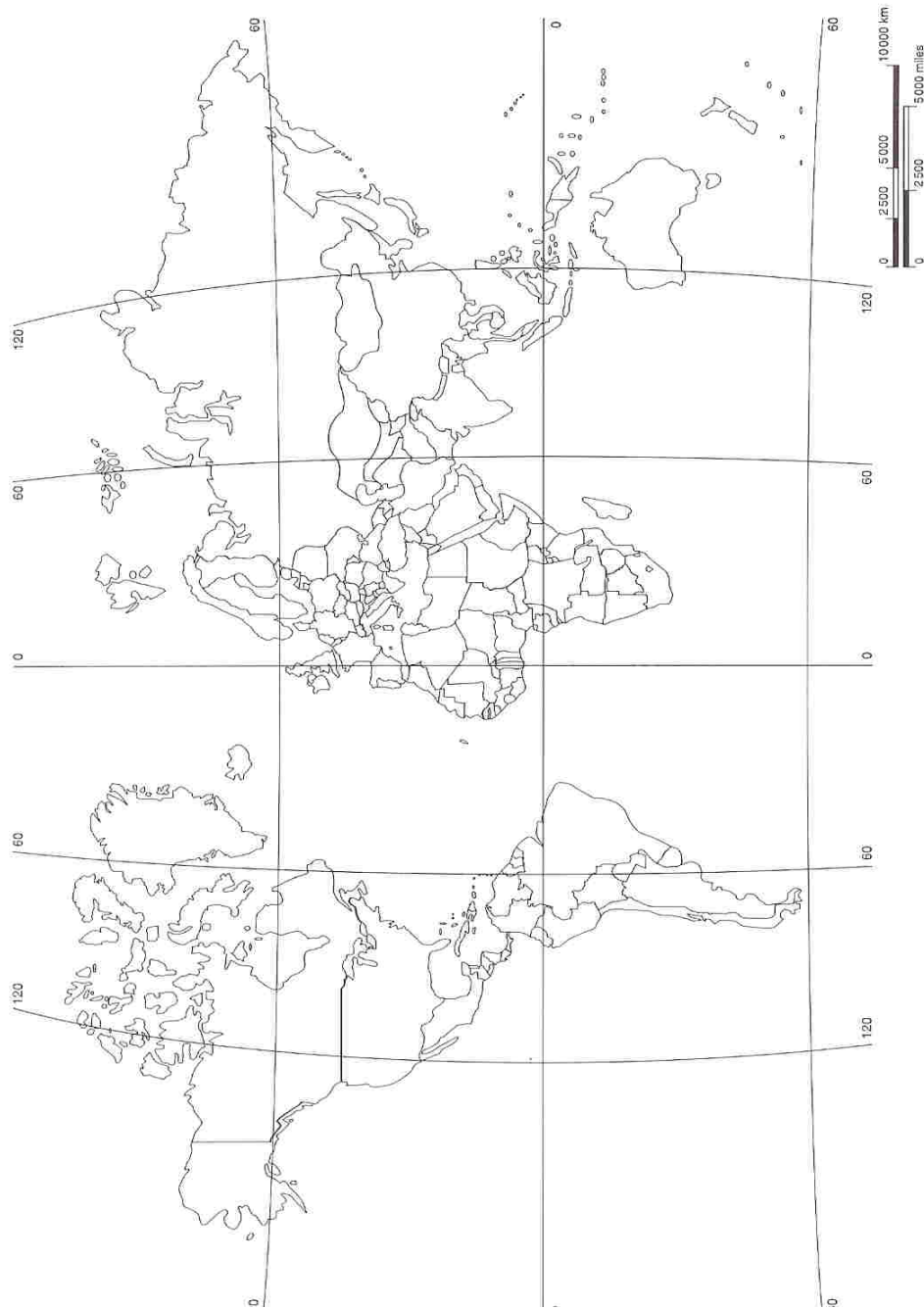
7.LA.4.1.2 Create original works that include descriptive strategies and figurative language

VIII. Follow-up Activities: See extension activities (**Teacher Handout #4**)

Teacher Handout 1

World Map

Germany in the World





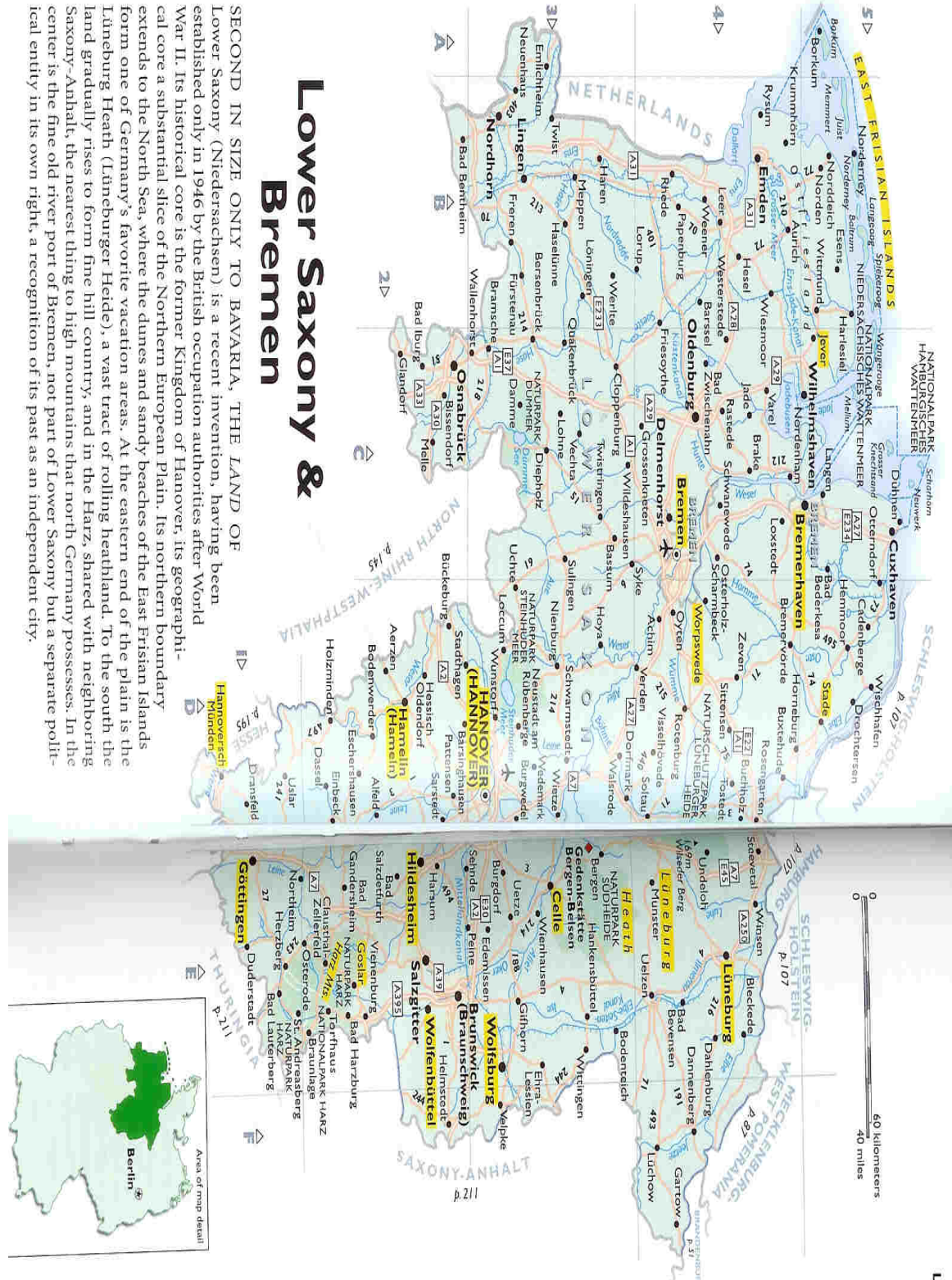
Germany Map

Traveling through Germany Map

Map of Lower Saxony and Bremen

Lower Saxony & Bremen

SECOND IN SIZE ONLY TO BAVARIA, THE LAND OF Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen) is a recent invention, having been established only in 1946 by the British occupation authorities after World War II. Its historical core is the former Kingdom of Hanover, its geographical core a substantial slice of the Northern European Plain. Its northern boundary extends to the North Sea, where the dunes and sandy beaches of the East Frisian Islands form one of Germany's favorite vacation areas. At the eastern end of the plain is the Lüneburg Heath (Lüneburger Heide), a vast tract of rolling heathland. To the south the land gradually rises to form fine hill country, and in the Harz, shared with neighboring Saxony-Anhalt, the nearest thing to high mountains that north Germany possesses. In the center is the fine old river port of Bremen, not part of Lower Saxony but a separate political entity in its own right, a recognition of its past as an independent city.



Extension Activities

The following activities are suggestions for expanding the lessons, reinforcing the Idaho Achievement Standards, and providing opportunities for differentiated learning. The options for use could include required assignments, extra credit assignments, written reports, oral presentations, individual or group work.

1. Direct students to conduct Internet research about modern-day Hamelin and the Sunday reenactment of “The Pied Piper of Hamelin,” the Brothers Grimm, or more information about the folktale, particularly what scholars consider the facts behind the legend of the Pied Piper.
2. Locate and read Robert Browning’s poetic version of “The Pied Piper of Hamelin” at <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/hameln.html>. Students might present the poem as Reader’s Theatre. Compare this and other versions of the tale.
3. Research various rat tales readily available on the Internet. Several are included on “The Grimm Brothers’ Home Page” at <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm.html>.
4. Students in teams or literature circles select a German folktale to study and present to the class in tableaux form. A rich source of tales is found on “The Grimm Brothers’ Home Page” at <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm.html>

“The Frog King”
“Cat and Mouse in Partnership”
“The Bremen Town Musicians”
“The Brave Little Tailor”
“Rapunzel”
“The Devil’s Three Gold Hairs”
“Darling Roland”
“The Fisherman and His Wife”
“The Goose-Girl at the Well”
“Tom Thumb”
“The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids”
“The Juniper Tree”
“Rumplestiltskin”
“Mother Holle”
“The Merman and the Farmer”
“The Golden Goose”
“Hansel and Gretel”
“Little Briar-Rose”
“The Seven Ravens”
“Snow White”
“Ashenputtel”
“Little Red Riding Hood”

Teacher Handout 4

“Sleeping Beauty”
“The Three Feathers”

5. Each literature circle selects a short folktale to read aloud to the class, present as Reader’s Theatre, or, using the tableaux guidelines sheet, present in the form of tableaux. Students might choose to create tableau drawings instead of enacting them before the class. Many shorter German folktales are found on “The Grimm Brothers’ Home Page.”

“The Hurds”
“Grandmother’s Table”
“The Star Talers”
“The Nail”
“The Fox and the Cat”
“The Shepherd Boy”
“The Fox and the Horse”
“The Ungrateful Son”
“Odds and Ends”
“A Riddling Tale”
“The Crumbs on the Table”
“The Fox and the Geese”
“The Ditmarsch Tale of Wonders”
“The Golden Key”

6. Create a poster, collage, shoebox scene, or movie box with rolling screen to illustrate a German folktale, its characters, and/or setting.
7. Follow **Fairy Tale Road**. Imagine that you are traveling along **Fairy Tale Road** (Märchenstrasse) in Lower Saxony. This is the land from Bremen to Hanau, the land of the Brothers Grimm. Based on research, create a travel journal, make an itinerary with a list of places to visit, create a travel brochure, or draw or print pictures from the Internet of what a traveler might see or experience (relating to the folktales) in these towns where people told their stories to Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm. **Bremen**: “The Bremen Town Musicians”; **Hamelin**: “The Pied Piper of Hamelin”; **Dornroschenschloss Sababurg (Veckerhagen, in Rheinhardswald**: “Sleeping Beauty”; **Trendelburg**: “Rapunzel”; **Gottingen**: “The Little Goose Girl”; **Kassel**: Bruder Grimm Museum; **Steinau an der Strasse**: The Brothers Grimm grew up in Steinau. **Hanau**: the birthplace of the Brother’s Grimm located just outside Frankfurt.
8. Direct students to fold paper in half lengthwise. On the left side, instruct them to list facts from a German folktale. On the right side, they will list inferences.
9. Read a German folktale to students; direct them to list the main events sequentially. Refer to list of tales above. Tales are available on Grimm Brothers’ home page at <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm.html>

Teacher Handout 4

10. Conduct research about topics or events that might have given rise to the kinds of tales people told to the Brothers Grimm.

The Plague or the Black Death
Troubadours (the Minnesanger)
Children's Crusades
Emperor Charlemagne
Thirty Years War

Student Handout 1

Reader-Response Activity: “The Pied Piper of Hamelin”

1. Describe the setting and explain the part that it plays in the story.
2. What details foreshadow that the tale will not end “happily ever after”?
3. Describe the overall mood of this tale and give two or more supporting details.
4. This story is told from what point of view? Circle one and write one or more specific reasons for your answer.
First Person
Second Person
Third Person Objective
Third Person Limited
Third Person Omniscient
5. List two or more specific details the narrator uses to show the reader the following characters:
the pied piper

the mayor
6. Describe any important themes contained in this story.
7. What is the meaning of the tale to the culture or the reason they tell this story?
8. The tale shows that this culture cares about which values?
9. Discuss any ways these values might appear in American culture.

Guidelines for Creating Enacted Tableaux for “The Pied Piper of Hamelin”

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1 Pick out three to four scenes that you feel summarize your assigned plot element or display aspects of the central concept. Decide on the characters (or forces or ideas), setting, and other details that need to be visually communicated.

2 Write or describe short telegraphic summaries of what each tableau should communicate about the event, detail, or conceptual aspect that is being displayed. Determine how the characters (or forces or ideas) will move and what they will do visually to depict the important details, emotions, aspects, and the significance of what you are presenting.

3 Create, act out, and freeze the scene or mental model into a tableau, as if you were suddenly made into statues, at the high point or most illuminating juncture of your scene/depiction.

4 "Melt" the tableau and reform it into another one that captures the next event or key detail.

5 Rehearse and perform. Your complete presentation of several tableaux and commentary should be approximately three minutes. (This length may vary depending on task, text, or assignment.)

Student Handout 3

Brainstorming Sheet: Folktale Tableaux

Idea used and modified with permission of Jeffrey D. Wilhelm, Ph.D., author of *Action Strategies for Deepening Comprehension*. Scholastic Inc, New York, NY, 2002.

The plot element we are presenting:

List two or three main details or events for each of the following elements of plot structure:

- a. exposition
- b. rising action
- c. climax
- d. falling action
- e. resolution

The 3 to 5 major scenes to be presented in our tableaux will be:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

The mood of our assigned plot element is:

The tableau scene depicting this mood will be:

The Pied Piper of Hamelin

A version of the Grimm Brothers' tale, adapted from the Electronic Text Center,

University of Virginia Library

A VERY long time ago the town of Hamelin in Germany was invaded by bands of rats, the like of which had never been seen before nor will ever be again.

They were great black creatures that ran boldly in broad daylight through the streets, and swarmed so, all over the houses, that people at last could not put their hand or foot down anywhere without touching one. When dressing in the morning they found them in their breeches and petticoats, in their pockets and in their boots; and when they wanted a morsel to eat, the voracious horde had swept away everything from cellar to garret. The night was even worse. As soon as the lights were out, these untiring nibblers set to work. And everywhere, in the ceilings, in the floors, in the cupboards, at the doors, there was a chase and a rummage, and so furious a noise of gimlets, pincers, and saws, that a deaf man could not have rested for one hour together.

Neither cats nor dogs, nor poison nor traps, nor prayers nor candles burnt to all the saints -- nothing would do anything. The more they killed, the more came. And the inhabitants of Hamelin began to go to the dogs (not that *they* were of much use), when one Friday there arrived in the town a man with a mysterious face, who played the bagpipes.

He was a great gawky fellow, dry and bronzed, with a crooked nose, a long rat-tail moustache, two great yellow piercing and mocking eyes, under a large felt hat set off by a scarlet cock's feather. He was dressed in a green jacket with a leather belt and red breeches, and on his feet were sandals fastened round his legs in the gipsy fashion. That is how he may be seen to this day, painted on a window of the cathedral of Hamelin.

He stopped on the great market place before the town hall, turned his back on the church and went on with his music, singing:

“Who lives shall see: This is he; The rat-catcher.”

The town council had just assembled to consider once more this plague of Egypt, from which no one could save the town.

The stranger sent word to the counsellors that, if they would make it worth his while, he would rid them of all their rats before night, down to the very last.

“Then he is a sorcerer!” cried the citizens with one voice. “We must beware of him.”

The Town Counsellor, who was considered clever, reassured them. He said, “Sorcerer or no, if this bagpiper speaks the truth, it was he who sent us this horrible vermin that he

Student Handout 4

wants to rid us of today for money. Well, we must learn to catch the devil in his own snares. You leave it to me.”

“Leave it to the Town Counsellor,” said the citizens one to another. And the stranger was brought before them.

“Before night,” said he, “I shall have dispatched all the rats in Hamelin if you will but pay me a *gros* a head.”

“A *gros* a head!” cried the citizens, “but that will come to millions of florins!”

The Town Counsellor simply shrugged his shoulders and said to the stranger, “A bargain! To work; the rats will be paid one *gros* a head as you ask.”

The bagpiper announced that he would operate that very evening when the moon rose. He added that the inhabitants should at that hour leave the streets free, and content themselves with looking out of their windows at what was passing, and that it would be a pleasant spectacle. When the people of Hamelin heard of the bargain, they too exclaimed: “A *gros* a head! but this will cost us a deal of money!”

“Leave it to the Town Counsellor,” said the town council with a malicious air. And the good people of Hamelin repeated with their counsellors, “Leave it to the Town Counsellor.”

Towards nine at night the bagpiper reappeared on the market place. He turned, as at first, his back to the church, and the moment the moon rose on the horizon, the bagpipes resounded. It was first a slow, caressing sound, then more and more lively and urgent, and so sonorous and piercing that it penetrated as far as the farthest alleys and retreats of the town.

Soon from the bottom of the cellars, the top of the roofs, from under all the furniture, from all the nooks and corners of the houses, out come the rats, search for the door, fling themselves into the street, and trip, trip, trip, begin to run in file towards the front of the town hall, so squeezed together that they covered the pavement like the waves of flooded torrent.

When the square was quite full, the bagpiper faced about, and, still playing briskly, turned towards the river that runs at the foot of the walls of Hamelin. Once arrived there he turned round; the rats were following.

“Hop! hop!” he cried, pointing with his finger to the middle of the stream, where the water whirled and was drawn down as if through a funnel. And hop! hop! without hesitating, the rats took the leap, swam straight to the funnel, plunged in head foremost and disappeared.

Student Handout 4

When the bagpiper had thus concluded his business, he went to bed at his inn. And for the first time during three months, the people of Hamelin slept quietly through the night.

The next morning, at nine o'clock, the bagpiper repaired to the town hall, where the town council awaited him. "All your rats took a jump into the river yesterday," said he to the counsellors, "and I guarantee that not one of them comes back. They were nine hundred and ninety thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine, at one *gros* a head. Reckon!"

"Let us reckon the heads first. One *gros* a head is one head the *gros*. Where are the heads?"

The rat-catcher did not expect this treacherous stroke. He paled with anger and his eyes flashed fire. "The heads!" cried he, "if you care about them, go and find them in the river."

"So," replied the Town Counsellor, "you refuse to hold to the terms of your agreement? We ourselves could refuse you all payment. But you have been of use to us, and we will not let you go without a recompense," and he offered him fifty crowns.

"Keep your recompense for yourself," replied the rat-catcher proudly. "If you do not pay me I will be paid by your heirs." Thereupon he pulled his hat down over his eyes, went hastily out of the hall, and left the town without speaking to a soul.

When the people heard how the affair had ended, they rubbed their hands, and with no more scruple than their Town Counsellor, they laughed over the rat-catcher, who, they said, was caught in his own trap. But what made them laugh above all was his threat of getting himself paid by their heirs. Ha! they wished that they only had such creditors for the rest of their lives.

Next day, which was a Sunday, they all went happily to church, thinking that after Mass they would at last be able to eat some good thing that the rats had not tasted before them.

They never suspected the terrible surprise that awaited them on their return home. No children anywhere; they had all disappeared! "Our children! Where are our poor children?" was the cry that was soon heard in all the streets.

Then through the east door of the town came three little boys, who cried and wept, and this is what they told:

While the parents were at church a wonderful music had resounded. Soon all the little boys and all the little girls that had been left at home had gone out, attracted by the magic sounds, and had rushed to the great market place. There they found the rat-catcher playing his bagpipes at the same spot as the evening before. Then the stranger had begun to walk quickly, and they had followed, running, singing and dancing to the sound of the music, as far as the foot of the mountain which one sees on entering Hamelin. At their approach, the mountain had opened a little, and the bagpiper had gone in with them, after

Student Handout 4

which it had closed again. Only the three little ones who told the adventure had remained outside, as if by a miracle. One was bandy-legged and could not run fast enough; the other, who had left the house in haste, one foot shod the other bare, had hurt himself against a big stone and could not walk without difficulty; the third had arrived in time, but in hurrying to go in with the others had struck so violently against the wall of the mountain that he fell backwards at the moment it closed upon his comrades.

At this story the parents redoubled their lamentations. They ran with pikes and mattocks to the mountain, and searched till evening to find the opening by which their children had disappeared, without being able to find it. At last, the night falling, they returned desolate to Hamelin.

But the most unhappy of all was the Town Counsellor, for he lost three little boys and two pretty little girls, and to crown all, the people of Hamelin overwhelmed him with reproaches, forgetting that the evening before they had all agreed with him.

What had become of all these unfortunate children? The parents always hoped they were not dead, and that the rat-catcher, who certainly must have come out of the mountain, would have taken them with him to his country. That is why for several years they sent in search of them to different countries, but no one ever came on the trace of the poor little ones.

The Pied Piper of Hamelin

A version of the Grimm Brothers' tale, adapted from
Jonas Kuhn's Pied Piper Home Page

Once upon a time ... on the banks of a great river in the north of Germany lay a town called Hamelin. The citizens of Hamelin were honest folk who lived contentedly in their grey stone houses. The years went by, and the town grew very rich. Then one day, an extraordinary thing happened to disturb the peace. Hamelin had always had rats, and a lot too. But they had never been a danger, for the cats had always solved the rat problem in the usual way - by killing them. All at once, however, the rats began to multiply. In the end, a black sea of rats swarmed over the whole town. First, they attacked the barns and storehouses, then, for lack of anything better, they gnawed the wood, cloth or anything at all. The one thing they didn't eat was metal. The terrified citizens flocked to plead with the town councillors to free them from the plague of rats. But the council had, for a long time, been sitting in the Mayor's room, trying to think of a plan.

"What we need is an army of cats!"

But all the cats were dead.

"We'll put down poisoned food then ..."

But most of the food was already gone and even poison did not stop the rats. "It just can't be done without help!" said the Mayor sadly.

Just then, while the citizens milled around outside, there was a loud knock at the door. "Who can that be?" the city fathers wondered uneasily, mindful of the angry crowds. They gingerly opened the door. And to their surprise, there stood a tall thin man dressed in brightly coloured clothes, with a long feather in his hat, and waving a gold pipe at them.

"I've freed other towns of beetles and bats," the stranger announced, "and for a thousand florins, I'll rid you of your rats!"

"A thousand florins!" exclaimed the Mayor. "We'll give you fifty thousand if you succeed!"

At once the stranger hurried away, saying: "It's late now, but at dawn tomorrow, there won't be a rat left in Hamelin!"

The sun was still below the horizon, when the sound of a pipe wafted through the streets of Hamelin. The pied piper slowly made his way through the houses and behind him flocked the rats. Out they scampered from doors, windows and gutters, rats of every size, all after the piper. And as he played, the stranger marched down to the river and straight

Student Handout 5

into the water, up to his middle. Behind him swarmed the rats and every one was drowned and swept away by the current.

By the time the sun was high in the sky, there was not a single rat in the town. There was even greater delight at the town hall, until the piper tried to claim his payment.

"Fifty thousand florins?" exclaimed the councillors, "Never ..."

"A thousand florins at least!" cried the pied piper angrily. But the Mayor broke in. "The rats are all dead now and they can never come back. So be grateful for fifty florins, or you'll not get even that ..."

His eyes flashing with rage, the pied piper pointed a threatening finger at the Mayor. "You'll bitterly regret ever breaking your promise," he said, and vanished.

A shiver of fear ran through the councillors, but the Mayor shrugged and said excitedly: "We've saved fifty thousand florins!"

That night, freed from the nightmare of the rats, the citizens of Hamelin slept more soundly than ever. And when the strange sound of piping wafted through the streets at dawn, only the children heard it. Drawn as by magic, they hurried out of their homes. Again, the pied piper paced through the town, this time, it was children of all sizes that flocked at his heels to the sound of his strange piping. The long procession soon left the town and made its way through the wood and across the forest till it reached the foot of a huge mountain.

When the piper came to the dark rock, he played his pipe even louder still and a great door creaked open. Beyond lay a cave. In trooped the children behind the pied piper, and when the last child had gone into the darkness, the door creaked shut. A great landslide came down the mountain blocking the entrance to the cave forever.

Only one little lame boy escaped this fate. It was he who told the anxious citizens, searching for their children, what had happened. And no matter what people did, the mountain never gave up its victims. Many years were to pass before the merry voices of other children would ring through the streets of Hamelin, but the memory of the harsh lesson lingered in everyone's heart and was passed down from father to son through the centuries.

<http://www.ims.uni-stuttgart.de/~jonas/pied.piper.of.hamelin.html>

Robert Browning (1812-1889)

The Pied Piper of Hamelin: A Child's Story

I.

1 Hamelin Town's in Brunswick,
2 By famous Hanover city;
3 The river Weser, deep and wide,
4 Washes its wall on the southern side;
5 A pleasanter spot you never spied;
6 But, when begins my ditty,
7 Almost five hundred years ago,
8 To see the townsfolk suffer so
9 From vermin, was a pity.

II.

10 Rats!
11 They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,
12 And bit the babies in the cradles,
13 And eat the cheeses out of the vats,
14 And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
15 Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
16 Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
17 And even spoiled the women's chats
18 By drowning their speaking
19 With shrieking and squeaking
20 In fifty different sharps and flats.

III.

21 At last the people in a body
22 To the Town Hall came flocking:
23 'Tis clear, cried they, our Mayor's a noddy;
24 And as for our Corporation -- shocking
25 To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
26 or dolts that can't or won't determine
27 What's like to rid us of our vermin!
28 Rouse up, Sirs! Give your brains a racking
29 To find the remedy we're lacking,
30 Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!
31 At this the Mayor and Corporation
32 Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV.

33 An hour they sate in council,
34 At length the Mayor broke silence:

Student Handout 6

35 For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell;
36 I wish I were a mile hence!
37 It's easy to bid one rack one's brain --
38 I'm sure my poor head aches again
39 I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
40 Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!
41 Just as he said this, what should hap
42 At the chamber door but a gentle tap?
43 Bless us, cried the Mayor, what's that?
44 (With the Corporation as he sate,
45 Looking little though wondrous fat);
46 Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?
47 Anything like the sound of a rat
48 Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!

V.

49 Come in! -- the Mayor cried, looking bigger:
50 And in did come the strangest figure!
51 His queer long coat from heel to head
52 Was half of yellow and half of red;
53 And he himself was tall and thin,
54 With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
55 And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
56 No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
57 But lips where smiles went out and in --
58 There was no guessing his kith and kin!
59 And nobody could enough admire
60 The tall man and his quaint attire:
61 Quoth one: It's as my great-grandsire,
62 Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
63 Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!

VI.

64 He advanced to the council-table:
65 And, Please your honours, said he, I'm able,
66 By means of a secret charm, to draw
67 All creatures living beneath the sun,
68 That creep, or swim, or fly, or run,
69 After me so as you never saw!
70 And I chiefly use my charm
71 On creatures that do people harm,
72 The mole, and toad, and newt, and viper;
73 And people call me the Pied Piper.
74 (And here they noticed round his neck
75 A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
76 To match with his coat of the self-same cheque;

Student Handout 6

77 And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;
78 And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying
79 As if impatient to be playing
80 Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
81 Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
82 Yet, said he, poor piper as I am,
83 In Tartary I freed the Cham,
84 Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats;
85 I eased in Asia the Nizam
86 Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats:
87 And, as for what your brain bewilders,
88 If I can rid your town of rats
89 Will you give me a thousand guilders?
90 One? fifty thousand! -- was the exclamation
91 Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII.

92 Into the street the Piper stept,
93 Smiling first a little smile,
94 As if he knew what magic slept
95 In his quiet pipe the while;
96 Then, like a musical adept,
97 To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
98 And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
99 Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;
100 And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
101 You heard as if an army muttered;
102 And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
103 And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
104 And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
105 Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
106 Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,
107 Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
108 Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
109 Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
110 Families by tens and dozens,
111 Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives --
112 Followed the Piper for their lives.
113 From street to street he piped advancing,
114 And step for step they followed dancing,
115 Until they came to the river Weser
116 Wherein all plunged and perished
117 -- Save one who, stout as Julius Caesar,
118 Swam across and lived to carry
119 (As he the manuscript he cherished)
120 To Rat-land home his commentary,

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121 Which was, At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
122 I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
123 And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
124 Into a cider-press's gripe:
125 And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
126 And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
127 And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
128 And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks;
129 And it seemed as if a voice
130 (Sweeter than by harp or by psaltery
131 Is breathed) called out, Oh rats, rejoice!
132 The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!
133 'So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
134 Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!
135 And just as one bulky sugar-puncheon,
136 Ready staved, like a great sun shone
137 Glorious scarce an inch before me,
138 Just as methought it said, Come, bore me!
139 -- I found the Weser rolling o'er me.

VIII.

140 You should have heard the Hamelin people
141 Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple;
142 Go, cried the Mayor, and get long poles!
143 Poke out the nests and block up the holes!
144 Consult with carpenters and builders,
145 And leave in our town not even a trace
146 Of the rats! -- when suddenly up the face
147 Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
148 With a, First, if you please, my thousand guilders!

IX.

149 A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue;
150 So did the Corporation too.
151 For council dinners made rare havock
152 With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;
153 And half the money would replenish
154 Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.
155 To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
156 With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!
157 Beside, quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,
158 Our business was done at the river's brink;
159 We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
160 And what's dead can't come to life, I think.
161 So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink
162 From the duty of giving you something for drink,

Student Handout 6

163 And a matter of money to put in your poke;
164 But, as for the guilders, what we spoke
165 Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
166 Beside, our losses have made us thrifty;
167 A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!

X.

168 The Piper's face fell, and he cried,
169 No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
170 I've promised to visit by dinner time
171 Bagdat, and accept the prime
172 Of the Head Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
173 For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
174 Of a nest of scorpions no survivor --
175 With him I proved no bargain-driver,
176 With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!
177 And folks who put me in a passion
178 May find me pipe after another fashion.

XI.

179 How? cried the Mayor, d'ye think I'll brook
180 Being worse treated than a Cook?
181 Insulted by a lazy ribald
182 With idle pipe and vesture piebald?
183 You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,
184 Blow your pipe there till you burst!

XII.

185 Once more he stept into the street;
186 And to his lips again
187 Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;
188 And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
189 Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
190 Never gave th'enraptured air)
191 There was a rustling, that seem'd like a bustling
192 Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
193 Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
194 Little hands clapping, and little tongues chattering,
195 And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
196 Out came the children running.
197 All the little boys and girls,
198 With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
199 And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
200 Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
201 The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

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XIII.

202 The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
203 As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
204 Unable to move a step, or cry
205 To the children merrily skipping by --
206 Could only follow with the eye
207 That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
208 But how the Mayor was on the rack,
209 And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
210 As the Piper turned from the High Street
211 To where the Weser rolled its waters
212 Right in the way of their sons and daughters!
213 However he turned from South to West,
214 And to Coppelburg Hill his steps addressed,
215 And after him the children pressed;
216 Great was the joy in every breast.
217 He never can cross that mighty top!
218 He's forced to let the piping drop,
219 And we shall see our children stop!
220 When, lo, as they reached the mountain's side,
221 A wondrous portal opened wide,
222 As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;
223 And the Piper advanced and the children follow'd,
224 And when all were in to the very last,
225 The door in the mountain side shut fast.
226 Did I say, all? No! One was lame,
227 And could not dance the whole of the way;
228 And in after years, if you would blame
229 His sadness, he was used to say, --
230 It's dull in our town since my playmates left!
231 I can't forget that I'm bereft
232 Of all the pleasant sights they see,
233 Which the Piper also promised me;
234 For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
235 Joining the town and just at hand,
236 Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew,
237 And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
238 And every thing was strange and new;
239 The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
240 And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
241 And honey-bees had lost their stings,
242 And horses were born with eagles' wings:
243 And just as I felt assured
244 My lame foot would be speedily cured,
245 The music stopped and I stood still,

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246 And found myself outside the Hill,
247 Left alone against my will,
248 To go now limping as before,
249 And never hear of that country more!

XIV.

250 Alas, alas for Hamelin!
251 There came into many a burgher's pate
252 A text which says, that Heaven's Gate
253 Ope to the Rich at as easy a rate
254 As the needle's eye takes a camel in!
255 The Mayor sent East, West, North, and South,
256 To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
257 Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
258 Silver and gold to his heart's content,
259 If he'd only return the way he went,
260 And bring the children behind him.
261 But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,
262 And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,
263 They made a decree that lawyers never
264 Should think their records dated duly
265 If, after the day of the month and year,
266 These words did not as well appear,
267 "And so long after what happened here
268 "On the Twenty-second of July,
269 "Thirteen hundred and Seventy-six:"
270 And the better in memory to fix
271 The place of the Children's last retreat,
272 They called it, The Pied Piper's Street --
273 Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
274 Was sure for the future to lose his labour.
275 Nor suffered they Hostelry or Tavern
276 To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
277 But opposite the place of the cavern
278 They wrote the story on a column,
279 And on the Great Church Window painted
280 The same, to make the world acquainted
281 How their children were stolen away;
282 And there it stands to this very day.
283 And I must not omit to say
284 That in Transylvania there's a tribe
285 Of alien people who ascribe
286 The outlandish ways and dress
287 On which their neighbours lay such stress
288 To their fathers and mothers having risen
289 Out of some subterraneous prison

Student Handout 6

290 Into which they were trepanned
291 Long time ago in a mighty band
292 Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
293 But how or why, they don't understand.

XV.

294 So, Willy, let you and me be wipers
295 Of scores out with all men -- especially pipers:
296 And, whether they pipe us from rats or from mice,
297 If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise.

Notes

1] Hamelin: Hameln, a town in Lower Saxony, on the Weser River, near Hanover. The town's 16th-century *Rathaus* Browning's probable source for the Pied Piper legend was Richard Verstegen's *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence in Antiquities* (1605), according to A. Dickson's "Browning's Source for *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*," *Studies in Philology* 23 (1926): 327-32. Hameln is not near Brunswick.

13] eat: ate.

35] guilder: gold coin in the Netherlands and regions in Germany.

83] Tartary: "the region of Central Asia extending eastward from the Caspian Sea, and formerly known as Independent and Chinese Tartary" ("Tartar," *OED*). Cham: khan, emperor of Tartars.

85] Nizam: the rulers of Hyderabad in India; also the Turkish army at this time.

127] train-oil: oil extracted from whale-blubber.

132] drysaltery: dry goods' store or business.

163] poke: a bag.

171] Bagdat: Bagdad, now in Iraq.

176] stiver: nothing, a very small coin (*OED*, "stiver," 2).

182] piebald: in different colours.

192] pitching and hustling: a children's game, in which "Each player pitches a coin at a mark; the one whose coin lies nearest to the mark then tosses all the coins and keeps those that turn up 'head'; the one whose coin lay next in order does the same with the remaining ones, and so on till all the coins are disposed of" (*OED*, "pitch-and-toss").

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214] Koppelberg, a small rise outside Hameln.

235] Joining: adjoining.

252] Matthew 19.24: "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

269] The legend dates the event in 1284.

284] Transylvania: mountainous region in western Rumania.

290] trepanned: trapped.

294] Willy: the son of William Macready, the English actor, for whom Browning wrote the poem as an entertainment during the boy's sickness.

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